Research Ethics Requirements and Institutional Auspices

(Effective July 1, 2026)

A. Research Conducted "Under the Auspices" of McMaster University

All research conducted under the auspices of McMaster University must comply with:

- The Tri-Agency Framework on the Responsible Conduct of Research
- The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2022)
- Applicable federal and provincial legislation, including but not limited to FIPPA, PHIPA, and any other applicable privacy or health information legislation
- Institutional policies and procedures
- Any applicable research agreements, contracts, or memoranda of understanding

Research conducted under the auspices of McMaster University should be supervised by a faculty member of McMaster University or by a McMaster employee as a function of their employment at McMaster University.

All required institutional approvals must be obtained prior to commencing any research activity.

Definition of "Under the Auspices of McMaster University"

Research is considered to be conducted under the auspices of McMaster University when the individual conducting the research has one or more of the following appointments at McMaster

Individual Appointment

The individual conducting the research:

1. Holds any paid or unpaid academic, clinical, adjunct, visiting, or special appointment at McMaster University; or
2. Is a registered undergraduate or graduate student; or
3. Is a Post Doctoral Student – Fellows or

4. is an employee of McMaster leading the research as a function of their employment at McMaster

And one or more of the following is true for the research activity

The research activity:

1. Uses McMaster facilities, space, equipment, infrastructure, or information technology systems; or
2. Uses non-publicly available McMaster data or institutional records including personal information, confidential information, unpublished data or results; where confidential information includes:

   (i)McMaster held or developed data, results, intellectual property, materials, records and information; or
   (ii) any other McMaster information that has been duly identified as confidential, in electronic, written, graphic or other tangible form, and in oral form promptly reduced to writing. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a failure to duly identify information as being confidential or a failure to confirm in writing an oral disclosure shall not mean that information would not be covered under the definition of Confidential Information when a reasonable person would understand it to be confidential in nature; or

3. Recruits McMaster students, staff, faculty, patients, or affiliates using institutional communication channels or non-public lists; or
4. Uses McMaster funding, grant administration, or financial accounts;

Where the above conditions apply, the research is considered under McMaster auspices and subject to institutional oversight and review, as applicable.

McMaster University reserves the right to determine whether research falls under its auspices based on but not limited to institutional risk exposure, regulatory obligations, reputational considerations, or use of institutional resources, even where such circumstances are not explicitly described above.

Research conducted under McMaster auspices engages institutional legal, regulatory, financial, and reputational responsibilities. Accordingly, determination of auspices must occur prior to the commencement of any research activity.

B. Research Not Considered Under McMaster Auspices

Research conducted solely within a faculty member's independent entity (e.g. private clinical practice, independent business/start-up etc.) is not considered under McMaster auspices. Unless a research partnership with McMaster is established, such research conducted solely by the independent entity cannot be presented as McMaster affiliated research in any way.

Research lead by a third party entity where an individual with a McMaster appointment is acting as a consultant as defined by the Statement on Consulting Policy and Procedures https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/06/Consulting-Policy.pdf and where the research does not use any McMaster resources from items 1 through 4 in section A above is not considered under McMaster auspices.

Where an institutional connection exists for research not meeting the requirements in section A, the research will be subject to a review in order to be deemed under McMaster auspices or to allow for the research specific extension of McMaster auspices through agreement.

External researchers with:

- No appointment at McMaster;
- No McMaster student status;
- No McMaster collaborators;
- No use of McMaster facilities or resources;

And where:

- No representation is made that the research is affiliated with McMaster;
- Recruitment conducted solely using publicly available data and methods

are not considered to be conducting research under McMaster auspices (see Section H for more details).

Where a faculty member, student or staff member holds a dual role or cross-appointment, the University shall assess whether the research is operationally and administratively independent.

C. Multi-Site Research

Ethics clearance granted by another institution does not negate McMaster University's responsibility where research is conducted under McMaster auspices.

McMaster reserves the right to require local ethics review, acknowledgment, or administrative clearance in accordance with institutional policies and applicable inter-institutional agreements and the TCPS2 requirements.

Researchers who are uncertain about review requirements must consult the appropriate Research Ethics Office prior to commencing research.

D. Who Must Complete an Ethics Application

An ethics application must be submitted when the research falls under McMaster auspices, and is a research activity with human participants, biological materials, and/or data that meets the TCPS2 criteria for requiring REB review.

This includes research done by:

- Faculty members with a regular research appointment
- Post-doctoral fellows
- Undergraduate and graduate students conducting research for course projects, theses, dissertations, or major research papers
- Staff who are leading research as a function of their employment with McMaster
- Individuals not affiliated with McMaster including external researchers who wish to conduct research on campus or recruit McMaster faculty, staff, or students or use McMaster facilities, data, or non-public recruitment channels *(see section H for more details)*

Any use of McMaster resources — including but not limited to physical space, institutional email lists, learning management systems, research infrastructure, or access to non-public institutional populations, data or information — constitutes research under McMaster auspices as determined by McMaster and requires institutional review or authorization.

E. Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of a research project are conducted responsibly and in compliance with applicable policies, sponsor terms, and regulatory requirements.

The designation of Principal Investigator establishes institutional accountability for:

- Ethical compliance
- Financial stewardship
- Regulatory adherence
- Responsible conduct of research

The PI is responsible for ensuring that all members of the research team comply with institutional policies and applicable sponsor requirements. When a PI at McMaster fails to ensure their team complies with institutional policies and sponsor mandates, they can face severe consequences. These range from loss of research funding and project suspension to formal institutional investigations and personal liability for unapproved expenditures as per McMaster's Research Integrity Policy.

Irrespective of institutional eligibility determinations, all applicants remain subject to the eligibility guidelines of the research sponsor.

F. Eligibility to Serve as Principal Investigator

The following individuals are generally eligible to serve as Principal Investigators on research grants and contracts, subject to sponsor requirements:

- Individuals holding paid academic appointments extending beyond the period of funding requested
- Clinical faculty whose appointment includes research activities
- Emeritus faculty, with authorization of their unit head to conduct research activities.
- Staff who are leading research as a function of their employment with McMaster

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G. Appointment Categories and Ethical Review Implications

1. **Active Faculty (Indefinite or Definite Term)**
   Faculty whose appointment includes research as part of their role are conducting research under McMaster auspices and require review where applicable.

2. **Emeritus Faculty**
   Emeritus faculty may conduct research under McMaster auspices where their department confirms eligibility to supervise students, conduct research, and provide appropriate resources.

3. **Registered Students**

Students actively registered in courses requiring research to fulfill academic requirements are conducting research under McMaster auspices and require review where applicable.

A supervising faculty member is required and is responsible for ensuring:

- Compliance with institutional policies
- Adherence to ethical standards
- Submission and maintenance of appropriate ethics approvals

4. **Adjunct, Visiting, and Special Appointments**

(i) Where an appointment includes research responsibilities, research conducted is under McMaster auspices and requires review where applicable.

(ii) If an adjunct or definite-term appointee is expected to conduct research or supervise student research, they may serve as PI if permitted by institutional and sponsor rules.

(iii) Where the appointment is time-limited, the responsible McMaster faculty member or academic unit assumes institutional accountability for ensuring ongoing compliance obligations, including:

- Ethics renewals
- Reporting requirements
- Data stewardship
- Study closure

If the appointment does not include research responsibilities, and the individual is not otherwise eligible to serve as PI, a full-time McMaster faculty must serve as PI or faculty supervisor.

5. Lecturers

Lecturers may serve as PI if their appointment letter specifies inclusion of research responsibilities and institutional eligibility requirements are met.

6. Staff

Non-faculty staff must have independent research responsibilities explicitly written into their employment contract or union classification to qualify.

7. Post-Doctoral Fellows

Post-doctoral fellows conducting research under McMaster auspices require ethics review where applicable.

An active faculty member must be named on the application and provide oversight consistent with institutional policy.

H. External Researchers

External researchers using McMaster facilities, infrastructure, non-public data, or institutional recruitment channels are conducting research under McMaster auspices and must:

- Clearly identify institutional resources to be used;
- Obtain all appropriate internal approvals;
- Obtain ethics review where applicable; and
- Enter into required written agreements with McMaster governing access, data use, confidentiality, and intellectual property as applicable to the research.

And, for research which will be reviewed by the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board (HiREB):

- Name a McMaster contact person; and
- Provide confirmation of appropriate insurance.

Failure to execute required agreements may result in denial or withdrawal of approval.

The McMaster contact is responsible for ensuring institutional policies governing resource use are followed as per McMaster's Research Integrity Policy.

External researchers with no McMaster institutional affiliation, no McMaster collaborators, no use of McMaster resources, and recruitment conducted solely through publicly available means are not considered to be conducting research under McMaster auspices.

I. Non-Compliance

A researcher at McMaster University who is non-compliant with government regulations or university policies faces a strict, multi-stage disciplinary process. Depending on the severity of the breach, consequences range from mandatory training and funding suspension to formal hearings, employment termination, and potential criminal or civil liability. Research Integrity Policy